

'HE WAS APPLAUDING'

At First, Just a Hand From the Crowd

By DAVID HOLMBERG
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At first, it was just another hand coming out of the crowd to shake Gov. Wallace's hand.

Then Mrs. Ross Speigle, a Laurel housewife, "saw the finger and the gun started to repeat fire."

He husband, a 46-year-old crane operator, is the man credited with wrestling the suspect to the ground.

Both are among the eyewitnesses at the shooting of Alabama Gov. George Corley Wallace yesterday for whom events became an unbelievable blur; a world moving too fast; television cameras that would correct some of them.

But it could not take away their impressions. It could not erase their feelings—the shock.

2 or 3 Minutes

Phillip Epling, 41, of East Pines, Md., could only repeat that he had seen Wallace shaking hands for about two or three minutes before the shots were fired, that he had heard voices calling the candidates to come over and sign autographs for them, and that the man who had fired the shots was "middle-aged, about 25 or 30."

And he could only say again and again: "It's a damn shame. A family man gets shot on his last day in Maryland. It's a damn shame."

Brigitte Hawkins, of Laurel, identified herself as the last person to shake Wallace's hand before the governor fell

to the ground and lay flat on his back.

She said she had noticed the man who had shot him a few minutes before; he was holding his hand to his hip for about five minutes, she said, as a man might do who had a weapon there. But she saw no gun and thought nothing of it—not until the police were putting him in an ambulance and she knew it was him.

Used First Name

As Wallace moved along the crowd, she said, the man had edged toward him, and then he said: "George, come over here. George, come over here." Wallace had heard him and moved toward the man, she said, and she had followed him.

Then, she said, she was immediately behind the man and she reached over his shoulder and shook Wallace's hand and "the instant I took my hand away he reached out and fired. Mine must have been the last hand he shook." She was not the only one who said that. She said she thought he fired with his left hand, although television film showed it was his right.

Mrs. Speigle said she was standing at the right of her husband with her 65-year-old mother, Mrs. Mary Winters.

Shook Hand Again

"He shook hands with Ross, and then with me, and then Ross told me 'shake his hand, honey,' I guess he didn't realize I already had, and I shook

his hand again," Mrs. Speigle recounted.

"Then this arm lunged over and I thought it was someone reaching out to shake his hand."

Mrs. Speigle remembers thinking it odd, as she threw herself to the ground, that the man was firing the gun directly into Wallace. "He was wearing a Wallace button," she said. "When we were applauding, he was applauding."

Fred Knapp, 16, of Laurel, told his story in the rain which hit the Laurel Shopping center about 6 p.m.

The rain had washed away the blood in front of the red and blue speakers' stand, from the shooting some two hours before.

Knapp huddled in a corner by a bank just adjacent to the stand and a few yards from a station wagon with signs on the back: "Wallace in '72. Register Communists, not firearms." He said he was a "junior member" of the National Rifle Association and that because of his experience with guns he was certain that the gun he saw fall to the ground shortly after the shots were fired was a .38-caliber automatic.

Hand Reaches Out

He said he had seen the man approach Wallace and that he had reached out his right hand as though to shake it and then pulled out the gun with his left.

The man, he said, "looked kind of weird." He said he was

short and stocky and had medium-length hair. He said he was dressed in a sport coat and a white shirt and wore Wallace buttons on his chest. (Several other witnesses said the man was wearing a Wallace shirt.)

Knapp said the man did not resemble the "hippie types"—all of them white—who had stood in the back of the crowd and occasionally heckled Wallace. "He definitely looked like a Wallace man," he said.

After the shots were fired, according to both Knapp and his brother, Russ, who was also nearby, the crowd set upon the assailant. "They were yelling 'Kill him, kill him,'" Knapp said, "and I thought they were going to do it."

The police—"who seemed a little scared themselves," Knapp said—had to pull the crowd off the man. And he said that at one point a black man—one of the few in the crowd—had yelled "Kill who?" in response to the shouts of "Kill him." The rest of the crowd around the assailant, apparently all white, had moved threateningly toward him, and the police edged in to prevent a fight.

For H. J. Edwards, the executive secretary of the Laurel Chamber of Commerce, the words of a Secret Service agent shortly before the shooting will long be remembered.